What Kind of Education?

by Rev. Walter L. Lingle, D. D.
President Emeritus of Davidson College

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Here on my desk is a striking article on the atomic bomb by the president of a great university. He does not believe that it is possible to keep the secret of the atomic bomb from the nations. Within a few years any nation that wishes will be in a position to make as many of these death-dealing bombs as it wishes. Nor does he believe that there is any material defense against these bombs, or that any can be invented or discovered. The only defense that he sees lies in education and more education, especially the kind that teaches men and women to think in world terms.

We do need that kind of education, but we need more than that. Education alone will never save the world from the atomic bomb or anything else. The Germans were among the best educated people in the world. The Japanese boasted of their educational system. Lord Bacon said long ago that knowledge is power, but unfortunately it is power to do evil as well as good. Our chief trouble is that the world has

grown much faster in scientific knowledge than it has in moral and spiritual ideals. So we have invented the atomic bomb and many other weapons of destruction, and do not have sufficient moral and spiritual power to control them or turn them to good purpose. We have not yet learned to beat our swords into plowshares and our spears into pruning hooks.

The kind of education that is needed today is an education which places its chief emphasis upon moral and spiritual values, and at the same time thinks in world terms. The first commencement address ever made at Davidson College was made in 1837 by Dr. J. H. Thornwell. His address was a plea for a Christian classical education as over against the utilitarianism of Jeremy Bentham and his followers. Even in those early days there was a conflict going on between those who believed in a Christian education and those who believed in an education for utilitarian purposes only. In the world at large utilitarians won. As a result we have the atomic bomb and many other instruments of death. In the meantime the nations have lagged so far behind in ethical and spiritual ideals that they

do not know how to control them.

The great need of the hour is for Christian education. Some way should be found for inculcating Christian ideals in our entire educational system from the primary grade to the university. I am aware that there are obstacles in the way in a country that emphasizes the complete separation of Church and State, but surely a way can be found if we will try hard enough.

In the meantime the various religious denominations have many church-related colleges which can begin at once to exalt Christian and ethical ideals in their application to world problems as they have never done before. Our Christian colleges seem to have come to the Kingdom for just such a time as this. In a country that stresses the complete separation of Church and State, the church-related college can do many things that the state-related institution cannot do from the very nature of the case. Let it be understood that it is not my purpose to cast any aspersions upon state-related institutions in anything that I shall say. They are a necessity. We could not get along without them. Besides, they are our very own, and we should love them.

Now let me name some of the things that our church-related institutions can do along Christian lines that state-related institutions, from the very nature of the case, cannot do.

1. First of all, they can insist that every member of the board of trustees must be an out-and-out Christian. Trustees have a great deal more to do in shaping the policies and ideals of an institution than most people suppose. At the very least, they elect the president, assist him in electing the members of the faculty, and pass upon the general principles that are to govern the institution. It means a great deal to an institution to have an out-and-out Christian board.

2. Church-related institutions can and should insist that every member of the faculty be an active Christian. In looking into the record of a prospective professor, the church-related college should ask as a minimum: Does he know his subject? Can he teach it? Will his influence in the classroom and on the campus be positively Christian? It makes a difference whether the man who teaches science feels that he is thinking God's thoughts after Him, or following the leadings of some blind

force. It also makes a difference whether the man who teaches history feels that he is unfolding God's plan for His world, or whether he feels that he is living in a purely chaotic world. The same applies to other professors and other departments.

But the biggest difference that a Christian faculty makes is to be found in the lives and personalities of its members. Not many years ago an old college mate asked me to think of all the teachers I ever had, and select from them the three or four who meant most to me, and then tell him whether they meant most by what they taught or by what they were. The three whom I selected were brilliant teachers, and I am grateful to them for what they taught me, but it did not take long to realize that they meant more to me by what they were than by what they taught. The place of personality in education has not been sufficiently emphasized.

3. A church-related college can select its students with the greatest care. It can lay especial emphasis upon moral and Christian character as a requirement for entrance. While I was president of Davidson College a father ap-

proached me with a view to entering his son, but said that in all frankness he would have to tell me that his son claimed to be an atheist, and had only recently written and distributed a circular setting forth his atheistic views. In reply I told the father that the objective of a Christian college is to educate its students for Christian leadership in the Church and in all the callings of life, and asked him if he thought we could make a Christian leader out of an atheist. It was not necessary to say more.

It would be difficult to decide whether the faculty or his fellow-students has the larger influence in shaping the character and ideals of a college student. Be that as it may, the student body exerts a tremendous influence upon a young man or young woman during the four college years. Whatever other questions parents should ask about an institution before entering a son or daughter, these two should be asked with great earnestness: What kind of faculty has it? What kind of a student body? A Christian faculty and a Christian student body make a world of difference.

4. The church-related college can have required courses in the English Bible, Christian ethics, and other courses in the Christian religion. As we listen to the sixty-four-dollar questions over the radio we are amazed at the ignorance that is shown when questions from the Bible are asked. Chaplains tell us that the ignorance of the Bible and of the elementary principles of the Christian religion on the part of many soldiers was almost beyond belief. We who are connected with colleges have been constantly astonished at the ignorance of the Bible shown by many young people who come to college. There are still many religious illiterates. In the meantime we bemoan the fact that there is growing delinquency on the part of young people.

There is an eloquent paragraph in Green's "Short History of the English People" to which I like to refer. It begins thus: "No greater moral change ever passed over a nation than passed over England during the years which parted the middle of the reign of Elizabeth from the meeting of the Long Parliament. England became the people of a book, and that book was the Bible." I have no doubt that a great

moral change would sweep over our nation, if the nation, like England of the sixteenth century, would become a nation of one book, and that book the Bible. No education should be considered complete without a knowledge of the Bible and the fundamental principles of the Christian religion.

5. The church-related college can have required chapel services, where faculty and students unite every day in services of worship and devotion. I am aware that there are some who object to required religious services of any kind, but those objections have never seemed valid to me. That may be because I was required to go to church from my childhood up. In addition to its spiritual values, a required chapel service every day serves as a unifying experience in the student body. It gives them a sense of oneness as nothing else can do. My experience and observation convince me that these chapel services have large spiritual values. For example, here is a Christmas card from a former student who did not seem to be particularly religious: "Maybe this would be a good time to tell you how much I enjoy Henry Drummond's 'Greatest Thing in the World,' and

your Christmas talk on the 'Crowded Hotel at Bethlehem,' and Weymouth's translation — all a part of four years at Davidson."

By these and other similar influences and processes, the Christian college seeks to make the Christian religion a part of the very warp and woof of the education of young people, instead of regarding it as something to be superimposed upon a secular education. In this way the Christian college is trying to prepare young men and women for Christian leadership in the Church, in the State, and in all the callings of life. If I had one word of advice to give to our church-related colleges in this atomic age, it would be that, while holding up high educational standards, they should strive to make their colleges more distinctively Christian, with emphasis upon Christian ethics and a Christian view of the world.

If I had one word of advice to give to the Christian people of America in this atomic age, it would be that we should stand by our Christian colleges and support them with our prayers, our patronage, and our money more earnestly than we have ever done before. The words of William Allen White, the dis-

tinguished editor of Emporia, Kansas, written a few years ago, are more true today than ever:

"If Christianity is to survive, it must survive in the environment made by Christian leaders. It cannot survive in the atmosphere that is thickening with modern paganism. Out of paganism come the crass ideals of the tyrants who are ruling Europe in Rome, in Moscow, in Berlin. And don't think that America is free of that atmosphere. We are still the land of liberty, but unless the free are brave, they will no longer be free. Unless those who believe in Christian civilization are willing to sacrifice of their good, hard-earned cash to educate Christian leaders, they will find in a few generations that their dream has vanished."

In view of the atomic bomb and other death-dealing instruments of war, we might also make the first sentence of that quotation to read thus: "If the world is to survive it must survive in the environment made by Christian leaders."

"Talks on Timely Topics," in the Christian Observer of January 30, 1946.

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